

## Richard M. Helms

This letter is in response to your excellent article (Aug. 16) on Richard M. Helms, former director of the Central Intelligence Agency. I am a retired CIA official, and during my long tenure with the agency I had the privilege of meeting with Helms on operational matters several times.

Helms is a very intelligent and forthright individual with outstanding leadership abilities, and in addition he is considered to be one of the most knowledgeable public figures on international economic and political affairs in this country. Moreover, he is one of the few former high-level CIA officials that has not rushed to write and publish his memoirs, and to hit the lecture circuit in order to make a fast buck on his vast knowledge of international intrigue and espionage.

The leadership of both the Republican and Democratic parties should take note of Helms' perceptive observation of the sad state of our foreign policy, which is partly the result of paying heed to the bunch of "false prophets" who have unduly influenced U.S. foreign policy over the past 25 years.

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Carpinteria

**Nick Thimmesch**

# Murky law regulates the registration of

## foreign agents

WASHINGTON—The Billy Carter rumpus caused me to think about how difficult the law concerning registration of "foreign agents" is to administer. Indeed, it often can operate in a downright foolish and inconsistent fashion.

In this town, all manner of people act as "foreign agents." Some register and some don't. The latter bunch gets away with it because of legal vagaries. In sum, the law requires that every person who becomes an agent for a "foreign principal" shall disclose the relationship, specifically where it involves political activity, representation, financial activities, or consultation.

The key question is whether the "agent" is in a control situation with the "foreign principal," a term covering governments, companies, associations, and individuals. In practice, nearly everyone who registers as a foreign agent with the Justice Department is getting paid for services rendered a foreign interest.

The law was enacted in 1938 when German and British agents were trying to influence U.S. policy at a time when World War II was about to erupt like a violent summer thunderstorm. The law has since been amended in a sort of truth in labeling manner, so the government at least knows who is representing what foreign interest. The number of registrants has doubled in the last 10 years, and now stands at about 700.

Check the list and you find the most wealthy and prestigious law firms, some getting retainers in six figures to look

after the interests of small and large nations, corporations, and tourist agencies. Liberia, Germany, Mauritania, France, the Argentine Meat Board, the mushroom packers and fireworks manufacturers of Taiwan, a lineup of Arab nations, and the World Zionist Organization—they're all there.

Every so often someone is prosecuted for not registering. Reading the New York Times business section is standard duty at the Justice Department to find out who just won a foreign contract.

Since the registration lists and accompanying materials are open to public inspection, activist groups pounce on certain new registrations as evidence that a given lobby—Arab, Jewish, Irish Revolutionary, pro- or anti-Taiwan or whatever—is becoming bigger and bolder.

One lawyer here with a pro-Arab reputation claims that the day after he went to the Justice Department to discuss whether he should register, a Washington newsman was phoned by a representative of a Jewish organization with an account of the visit. There is plenty of evidence that Jewish groups provide journalists with material on "Arab money" and activity by Arab "foreign agents."

The term "foreign agent" sounds almost sinister. It brings to mind the shady fellow wearing a trench coat and oversized hat pulled over his face who lurks about a fog-enshrouded waterfront dive. The foreign agents who register here, however, are not about to subvert the republic. They either affect to be "straight," right out in the open, or in some cases want to let prospects know they are available.

But who is a foreign agent? Is Henry Kissinger one because he contracted to provide his judgments on international affairs to General Electric of Great Britain—on British soil, only, he says. Kissinger isn't registered; nor was former CIA Director Richard Helms for services provided Iran when it was run by the shah. What about a professor asked by, say, Japan, to do a study on how Congress might legislate against foreign cars? Should he register?

I have rummaged through half a ton

of miserable documents, and I must conclude that this foreign agent area is murky, indeed. There are many in this town who legally don't have to register but should do so for the sake of honesty.

Anyone who read Stephen Isaacs' "Jews and American Politics" or has been around Capitol Hill knows there is a network of congressional staffers [Isaacs calls them "semitophiles"] often orchestrated into pro-Israeli actions by Morris Amitay's American Israel Public Affairs Committee. Now AIPAC claims it has only "informal" contacts with the Israeli Embassy, but anybody who believes that is misguided.

The same goes for anyone who believes that the National Association of Arab Americans, a new and increasingly feisty outfit, does not co-ordinate some of its activities with Arab nations or interests.

Neither AIPAC or NAA is registered, but a poor little group called the Lebanese Information and Research Center, which distributes a relatively calm newsletter, is, though its impact on Congress and the government is about that of a feather hitting the Rock of Gibraltar.

Finally, another Washington soul who should register is former U.S. Sen. James Abourezk who works for Khomeini's Iran and fits even the fuzzy guidelines of this bewildering law. Abourezk doesn't look like a "foreign agent," but he flacks for Iran while claiming to perform only legal work.

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# Specter of Nuclear Blackmail

**THE FIFTH HORSEMAN.** By Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre. Simon and Schuster. 478 pp. \$13.95

By RICHARD HELMS

**I**N A PLOT which sets up a contest between the wills and skills of the president of the United States and Libyan strongman Muammar al-Qaddafi, the leading character turns out to be a detective first grade in the New York Police Department, Angelo Rocchia.

*The Fifth Horseman* is a novel about thermonuclear bombs in the hands of terrorists. Whence this title? Those who are up on chapter six of *The Revelation of Saint John* may recall that white, red, black and pale horses had riders who might be called Pestilence, War, Famine and Death. These were known as "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse," enshrined many years ago in the title of a book by Blasco Ibanez. "Now... a Fifth Horseman has emerged from the entrails of hell to scourge humanity with terror, with arms so terrible even John's hallucinating imagination could not have conceived them," to quote from this book.

In the genre of *The Crash of '79* and *The Day of the Jackal*, this suspense novel is readable and in places exciting. It mixes fact and fiction—names, places, events and details—so relentlessly that a word of caution is in order. The reader had best regard the entire book as fictional and not attempt to judge which details are fact and which are fiction. If he does attempt this, he is bound to form an exaggerated opinion of the technological prowess of our country and the extent to which a deity looks after our affairs.

But for some, especially Washington readers, it will be intriguing to note which officials in this book are given their real names and which have new identities. The secretary of state, Andrew Peabody, is fictional. Warren Christopher, his deputy, gets his real name. Harold Brown is secretary of defense and William Webster is director of the FBI. The head of the CIA, however, is Gardiner "Tap" Bennington, said to be a devotee of Allen Dulles. (Since when did that distinguished director of Central Intelligence spell his name "Allan"?) One is bound to wonder whether the

authors felt that certain of these individuals had more assured tenure than others, and if so, what crystal ball they used. Providentially, the president is not given a name.

It would spoil the story to say more about the plot than that the terrorists have smuggled a hydrogen bomb into Manhattan to blackmail the president. But it is fair to note that inhabitants of greater New York will find themselves thoughtfully figuring how they would evacuate that great city on short notice. It is the old shouting "Fire" in-a-crowded-theater syndrome, only on a far more massive and agonizing scale. In Washington a little-known organization called the Federal Emergency Management Agency is responsible for such matters. The reader will quickly come to the prayerful hope that this agency is on top of its job and among other things is checking its shelters dutifully. How reassuring is it to know that as of 1980 FEMA's "new civil defense policy" has among its programs one which includes "planning for population relocation during times of international crisis as well as be adaptable to help deal with natural disasters and other peacetime emergencies"?

In a setting of power, advanced technology and international negotiation, the one figure in the book who has true-to-life identity and emotions is our New York cop, Angelo Rocchia. His street smarts, his experience, his personal woes make him stand out among the plastic figures who dot the landscape. Perhaps he belongs to the wrong generation, but the treatment he receives from his paramour, Grace Knowland, a reporter for *The New York Times*, makes one wonder about certain modern attitudes. Professionally, however, he is what every citizen wants in a detective, and he may be forgiven his resentment of the FBI since most big-city cops share it.

The authors, Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, former journalists for *Newsweek* and *Paris Match* respectively, have collaborated on five books of which this is the first novel. Their initial effort, *Is Paris Burning?* was an exciting recreation of life in the French capital during World War II as seen through the eyes of intensely human par-

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ticipants. It is perhaps for this reason that the French characters and settings in *The Fifth Horseman* have a particularly solid resonance.

The publishers of this book could hardly have counted on the recent publicity given to Billy Carter's arrangements with the Libyan government. From the point of view of sales it is almost too good to be true. But don't let this distract us from the fact that Libya, in the words of President Carter, "has repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism." In an unclassified study a few years ago the Central Intelligence Agency made the judgment that "Colonel al-Qaddafi has been one of the world's least inhibited practitioners of international terrorism."

George F. Will, the columnist, wrote a year ago, after an international conference on terrorism in Jerusalem: "When a government, such as that of Libya, is involved in terrorism from Ulster to Israel, then only prudential considerations on the part of the nations attacked can weigh against actions to change that government. This subject comes ... under the heading of thinking the unthinkable. But the beginning of wisdom in dealing with terrorism is to face this fact: no act is unthinkable when so many terrible acts are successful."

It may perhaps give a shudder to the readers of *The Fifth Horseman* to hear another judgment written in the same CIA study noted above: "The prospect of nuclear-armed terrorists can, in fact, no longer be dismissed. But because of the major problems that would be involved in the acquisition, storage, transport, and employment of a nuclear device, a more likely scenario—at least in the short term—would be a terrorist seizure of a nuclear weapons storage facility or a nuclear power plant to exploit the publicity and the bargaining power inherent in the attendant threat of radiological pollution."

The plot of this book is by no means as farfetched as it may at first appear. The combination of nuclear power and terrorism has indeed created a "fifth horseman" to menace man's survival. The implications are sobering in the extreme.

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